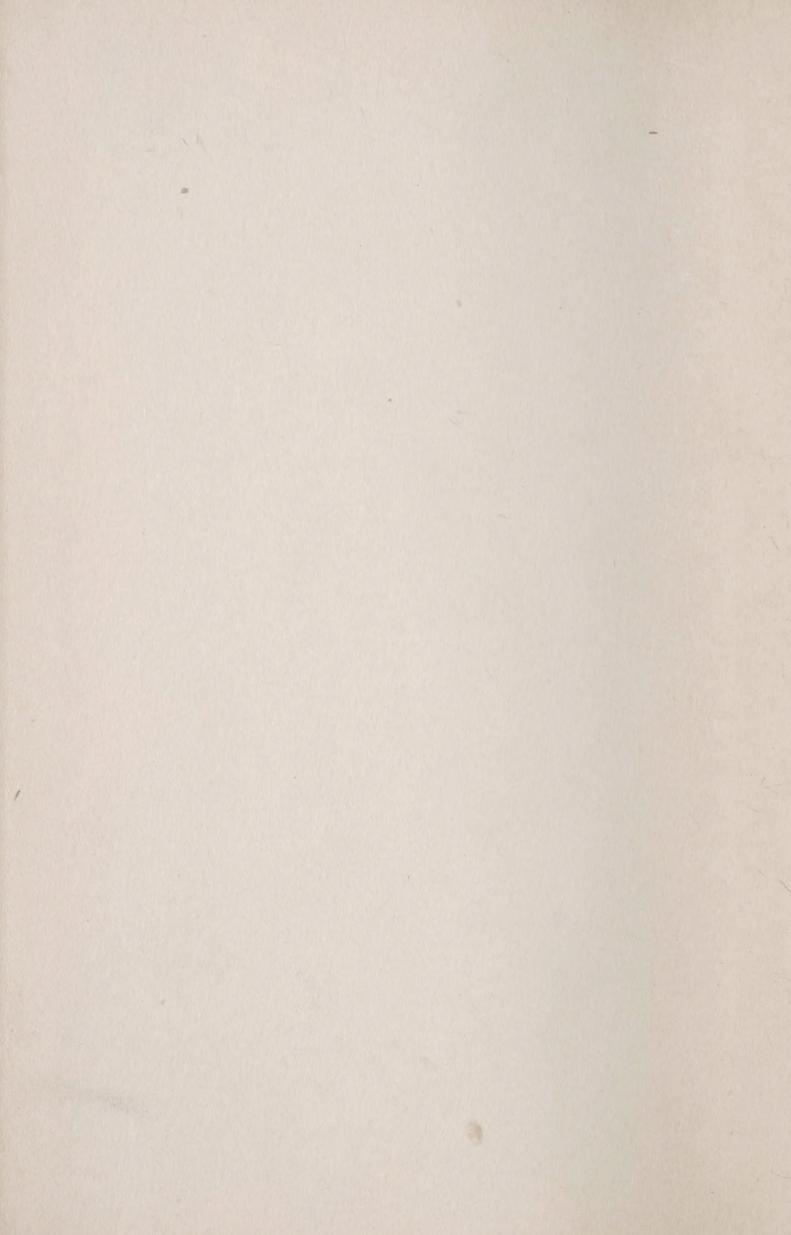




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THE DOLLAR HUNT.







"The marquis thought the young girl still prettier than on the previous evening."—Page 60.

THE DOLLAR HUNT.

FROM THE FRENCH.

BY E. G. MARTIN.

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THE DOLLAR HUNT.

CHAPTER I.

MADEMOISELLE DURAND PLANS A CAMPAIGN.

"IF you want my advice, dear mother, here it is. Make him travel. In Paris he is done for—completely done for!"

Two women, mother and daughter, were chatting beside the fire, the scanty fire of people who count their sticks. For that matter, in this antique salon at once noble and dismal in appearance, everything, from the worn and old-fashioned furniture to the threadbare carpets, proclaimed not actual poverty but

straitened circumstances borne with dignity and without complaint. Still, a servant opened the door, and the Marquise de Sainbrillat had her carriage, a coupé by the month.

"It is not so easy to make him travel, my dear. You speak as if it were. Since your marriage you no longer see sous cut into quarters, God be thanked! But I have had to bleed myself dry—for your dowry in the first place, and afterward to pay your brother's debts. So it is not into four but into eight pieces that I have to cut my poor sous! And, not-withstanding, a Marquis de Sainbrillat can not travel third-class."

The Baroness de Kirchenthal heaved an impatient sigh. She was a short and scrawny woman, not at all good-looking, who was called in her own circle "the little baroness," firstly on account of her figure, and then because her name exhaled a certain odor of Judaism. Still, the baron accompanied his wife to Mass, and if he kept open the paternal bank, thanks to which the sous were not cut into eight nor even into four, not a trace was left of the synagogue—not a trace unless it were a nose a trifle hooked—but so slightly! Mlle. de Sainbrillat had eagerly accepted an alliance with the banker, although he was a widower, not very young and not at all handsome. But he had a large fortune and a title is always a title, even though it may not pretend to go back to the Crusades.

"And to think that we had arranged things so well! My husband was perfect, mother; you have admitted it yourself. I suppose there is no way of providing for Robert in your circle? Beggar that he is, there is his detestable reputation into the bargain."

"See here, Claire, he is no worse than many others, after all!"

"That may be, but why display what

others hide? Tales about Robert have become legendary; what things I have heard about him since my marriage!"

"There are the Americans," said the mother, after a brief silence.

"Ah, mother dear, how easy it is to see that you live in your corner! That is the first idea that presents itself to the sons of ruined families. American girls are much sought after, greatly in demand on 'Change; no compromising shop on Rue Montmartre or anywhere else, coming from a country where there is no aristocracy but that of money; often pretty, plenty of chic. What a lot of escutcheons they have regilded! People are taken in, sometimes; fortunes over there are subject to a good many disquieting risks; but the risks are taken, all the same. Twenty years ago it was a real gold mine, a traveling California. Since then, the little Americans have grown a trifle suspicious; they find very often that the game is not worth the candle. No, dear mother, do not cherish those delusions. Robert has no more chance in the American colony than on the Paris money market. He is done for here; completely done for, I tell you."

Without making any direct reply, the marquise rose and went to a small desk, from which she took a letter.

"Read that, Claire; I did not wish to mention it to you, but I have concluded to do so. It is from Mlle. Durand."

"My former governess? What can she have to say to you? I thought you had quarreled."

"Read it, my child. Read it aloud. We will talk about it afterward."

"'Chicago, March 15, 1888.

"" Madame la Marquise:

""You will be surprised at receiving a letter from me; for my part, I am surprised to find myself writing to you.

But after reflecting for a long time, I have concluded to communicate with you concerning a business matter which may deserve attention on your part, and to do so with that frankness which is not unknown to you, and for which you have even reproached me somewhat severely. I have said 'business matter,' and I abide by the expression.

"'I seldom have a chance to see the Paris papers in this detestable country. One has just been sent me.'"

"She too," groaned the marquise.
"She knows about the 'good day, you'!
In Chicago!"

"'It was reading this journal which influenced me to write you, for it was impossible not to recognize in the hero of the story told, M. le Marquis Robert de Sainbrillat.'"

"To think that a gentleman is not safe from the vile attacks of a needy journalist!"

"Mother, do let me go on reading.—
Robert got only what he deserved. The letter of that sly Durand begins to interest me. She is not destitute of intelligence; she must have comprehended as I do that Robert has become impossible in Paris."

And the little baroness once more began the letter which she now found interesting.

- "'It is becoming difficult to marry in your circle, madame la marquise; and yet, marriage being the plank of safety for gentlemen who are drowning, you must be thinking of it even more than you did in my time, when you already thought a great deal.
- "I have a match to propose to you. That is the reason of this letter and its excuse.
- "'When the education of Mme. the Baroness de Kirchenthal was completed and I left your house, madame la marquise,

I had not, as I might have expected, the means to live on without working."

"She expected a retiring pension, like a colonel or a chief of division! Where on earth could I have found the means to give her one?"

"After several unfortunate attempts I entered an American family where I am conducting the education of two little girls. The family hoped to remain in Europe for some years; it was summoned back to Chicago by its head, who finally grew tired of earning in America the dollars which his wife spent in Paris. I followed Mrs. Fairfax; this happened about a year ago. I am very well treated and admirably well paid—but I am dying of ennui.

"In addition to my little pupils there is a girl of twenty who answers to the name of Nannie, otherwise Anne. The first care of American parents is to give their children names by which they never

call them afterward; others are invented. The Fairfax family is frightfully rich. The father, a sort of banker, a stockjobber especially, bought a quantity of land at a very low price in prehistoric times (somewhere about 1850), and this land has become astonishingly valuable. The only difficulty is that in this country of savages dowries are never given to daughters. There is a combination of good sense and antiquated sentimentality among our dealers in pork or petroleum which is quite delightful. However, that does not prevent a father from making very fine presents to his daughters; it comes to the same thing; everything is included except the word dowry, which offends the delicate ears of our Yankees.

"'I feel very sure, madame la marquise, that in considering the available heiresses you have thought of the Americans. Believe me, those who are already launched in Paris have their eyes too wide open; moreover, they are too much surrounded, they have too much choice among the played-out nobles who are paying court to their millions. Send your son to hunt the bison—that euphemism covers everything—in the American prairies. He will necessarily pass through Chicago; I will find means of keeping him there for some time. When game grows scarce in one place—I am not speaking now of bisons—the skilful hunter changes his ground. Let M. le marquis change his ground.

"The difficulty of having a sufficient fortune given to the future marquise still remains. That is my affair. Mr. Fairfax adores his daughter, who, for that matter, is the undisputed queen of the whole family. Let her take a fancy to love the marquis—and he has been able to make others love him—and I answer for the result.

"'Is it necessary to say, madame la marquise, that I am not at all disinter-

ested in this affair? I aspire to leave this land of liberty, to live on my own income in a country place which I know and adore, and to give up making Anglo-Saxons stumble through the fables of La Fontaine, which they make fun of. If I obtain but one million on the weddingday, you need give me only twenty thousand francs; for two millions, forty thousand, and so on. I hope that the millions will be many; I think I am not alone in wishing so.

""Now, if the business attracts you, madame la marquise, let me manage it from the start. My young savage must not suspect for an instant that the marquis comes for anything but hunting. This is absolutely essential. She is very suspicious, Miss Nannie, from the moment when she gets a hint of any motive but pure love in those who pay court to her. I must say, although I do not like Americans in general, that this young girl is very

charming, that she is natural, frank, impulsive, and of a gay and open character. Life has smiled on her and she smiles on life. It is easy to be good when one is happy. Nannie's grandfather was a farmer, a mere peasant. His granddaughter would be at her ease in a palace; her beauty is that of a patrician, her feet are the feet of a marquise, and she has the instinct of dress to a rare degree. Moreover, I have purloined one of her photographs, which I send you. Burn it after you have shown it to Marquis Robert, I beg of you.

"'Answer me at once, madame la marquise. I will not conceal from you that Miss Fairfax is much sought after. Thus far she has preferred no one; all she thinks of is amusing herself; her heart has never spoken yet, I am sure—but some day or other—. In fine, madame, do not allow your aversion for me personally to induce you to reject the bar-

gain I propose. You see that I do not seek to disguise that it is a bargain.

"'Accept, madame la marquise, the expression of my profound respect.

"'Valérie Durand.'"

"Let me see the portrait," said the little baroness after a rather long silence. The marquise held out a photograph to her daughter.

"My former governess is right; she is pretty, she is more than pretty—she is something different from that."

The marquise bent down to look at the picture likewise. The countenance of the foreigner smiled at her, a slightly mocking smile. Very fine features, slightly curling hair, a lithe and slender figure, combined to make a really pretty girl. However, it was not the beauty that struck one first, but the expression, the overflow, as it were, of intense life.

Instinctively the little baroness glanced

at herself in the mirror and sighed. She sprang, for her own part, from a very noble family, from blood extremely pure. And it seemed to her that this blood was rather poor, that it had ended in producing a mean and stunted being, dull and sapless.

"My dear mother, Robert shall start as soon as you have received instructions from Mlle. Durand. She is right; she must command this expedition into an enemy's country. My husband will advance a large sum which you can repay him after you have embraced your American daughter-in-law."

CHAPTER II.

"J'AI FAIT UN FOUR."

MLLE. VALÉRIE DURAND, governess in the Fairfax household, was installed one bright June morning in the schoolroom, awaiting her pupils. She had just been glancing into the papers, and a smile hovered over her thin lips. She had never been pretty, and she was no longer young; but she was well-bred, her manners were very good, and she concealed a natural tendency to irony and pessimism under a correct and imperturbable exterior.

There was nothing severe about the schoolroom; it was large, light and cheerful, with an immense bay window, forming a semi-rotunda such as one often

sees in American houses, and looking out upon the lake. On this lovely, sunny day, the lake, as large as an inland sea, glittered under a marvelously clear sky. Mlle. Durand, a transplanted Parisienne, detested Chicago; nevertheless when she raised her eyes she could not avoid recognizing the beauty of the scene on which they rested.

A light rustle of skirts disturbed her meditations. Nannie Fairfax entered and sat down near the governess. She sometimes came to chat with her, or to read a few pages of Corneille or Racine; she spoke French, for that matter, very readily and correctly, having spent several years in a boarding-school near Paris. Mlle. Durand had not flattered the young girl in her letter to the marquise. Tall, slim, supple in her movements, as graceful as possible, Nannie Fairfax was charming; a trifle pale, perhaps, but with an expressive countenance and very brilliant light

blue eyes, although her hair was almost black, a peculiarity which gave what one might call a certain irrelevancy to this charming face.

"Are not the children coming?" asked Mlle. Durand. "It is time."

"Ah! you will not get them so early. They are having a romp with papa before he goes to his office, and you know that when he is playing with the little girls he is not to be disturbed."

"No more than when he is chatting with his big girl."

"I should think so. Poor papa, how stupid he must have found it when we were away in Europe! So he ended by getting very mad at last and sending for us to come back."

"While Mrs. Fairfax, for her part-"

"Oh!, mamma, that is quite another thing! She was sacrificing herself for her children. It is astonishing how many American mothers there are who devote themselves to the education of their daughters. On our last voyage our companions were six mothers in the same case as mine. They formed a mutual admiration society; the husbands remained at home to earn the money required for this painful sacrifice. It was very amusing to listen to them."

"It seems to me that respect—"

"I know I shock you, mademoiselle. But I do not shock mamma; we adore each other, and that is the essential thing. I have trained mamma very well; she nearly always obeys me. She was a little vexed with me two years ago, though. She had counted upon my dazzling Paris. I did not dazzle anything at all. I made—how do you say that?—I did not make a success—j'ai fait un four."

"Nannie! that is a thing which is not said."

"You see very well that it is, since I said it. I understand how it happened,

now that I have a little experience. We were not properly introduced, and in society it is everything to be well or badly introduced. Mamma fancied that everybody would be at our feet if we had plenty of money and spent it prodigiously. Well! it did not turn out so. There are many Americans over there who take a whole suite at the Continental, keep a fine carriage, show themselves at the Opéra and the Français, and pay perfectly silly bills to fashionable dressmakers. All that is very well; but something else is needed. Mamma had a few poor little letters of introduction; our calls were returned, we were invited to a ball here and there, where we did not know a soul and where we were bored —oh, bored to death! In the American colony there is a heap of divisions and subdivisions; people whom you must know and people whom you must not. We got into a perfect snarl. In thinking of my education mamma had forgotten to complete her own from the worldly point of view. She artlessly believed that I was going to be a princess at the very least, and that within six months. She is mad about titles."

"And are you too?"

"Not nearly so much. I liked my own Americans much better than the few coronated people whom I visited, just as I prefer my Chicago where I am at liberty, where I played as a child, where people love me, to your beautiful Paris where I was bored!"

"Every one to his taste."

"Yes, I know. You detest America. You regret the time when you were educating—what was the name of that insupportable goose?"

"Mlle. de Sainbrillat."

"Ah! mamma was right. I insisted that that was not the name. She read this morning—"

"That the Marquis Robert de Sainbrillat was coming, just like the royal princes who are finishing their education, to study the civilization of this fine country, and that he expects to go to the Rocky Mountains to hunt the bison. Much good may it do him—him who might remain in Paris!"

"Then he is really the goose's brother?

Do you know mamma is burning with envy to make his acquaintance. Is he good-looking?"

"Neither bad nor good. For that matter, I never saw much of him; I must say that he was always very polite, which was not often true of his sister. I think him very high-minded under an appearance of levity. But, I know very little of him."

"Mamma wishes you to write and invite him to come and see you."

Mlle. Durand began to laugh, a rather bitter laugh.

"It is easy to see that Mrs. Fairfax belongs to the country of the Iroquois. It no longer surprises me that, as you say, she fait un four! Here you treat me as if I were one of the family; in the house of Mme. de Sainbrillat, although she, personally, was very kind, I was the governess, that is, something a little higher than the chambermaid. I write to the marquis! He would treat me like a crazy woman, and he would not be wrong. If he should happen to meet me by chance, I know of course that he would greet me politely and inquire after my health. But come and see me? No, my dear Nannie, you Yankees—"

"We are not Yankees, we are Westerners. Besides, mademoiselle, I care nothing about your marquis; it is mamma. Then he is not handsome? That is the finest of your titles—marquis, marquise; it brings up at once a vision of lace ruffles and silk stockings, such as they wear on the stage."

"If you meet the marquis he will probably be dressed from head to foot in the English style; it is not so handsome as lace ruffles, but it is more convenient."

At this moment, the two little girls, with rosy cheeks, bright eyes, and golden hair falling to the waist, made a noisy entrance. It was easy to see that La Fontaine was going to have a bad quarter of an hour. The elder sister, nowise disconcerted by the failure of her embassy, rose and recommended the little ones to recite their French verbs well. The elder of the two made a significant grimace, and exclaimed in the most nasal tone imaginable:

"It's a mean language, anyhow!"

But on that day their teacher's patience was equal to every trial. Every time she thought of her conversation with Nannie Fairfax, she smiled. And she smiled very often.

Nannie, on her part, ran downstairs,

did not see her mother, put on a large straw hat and went alone toward Lincoln Park. She walked quickly, enjoying the sweet, pure air, and enjoying especially the sense of her own vitality. The long avenue which borders the lake was almost deserted at this hour; there were very few promenaders in the park, and she was pleased with her long walk and the sunlight of June. How good it was to be young, and beautiful, and free, and how she loved the life she led among her friends, young girls and young men whom she had known since she was little, when she went with them to school, whither an adorer—she always had had adorers—carried her books. At bottom she was quite contented to have "fait un four" at Paris, to have escaped being married for her dollars. For that matter, she had no desire to marry as yet; that would come later on, doubtless, in the natural order of things, but much later

on. No life in the world is more delightful than that of a young girl, much courted, much beloved, on the borders of beautiful Lake Michigan! And as she was saying this to herself, Nannie smiled to think that her mother was already dreaming of this Marquis de Sainbrillat! Mlle. Durand said he possessed a noble and haughty nature under the appearance of a gay and careless man of the world. So she also is beginning to think of it! And suddenly she broke into a peal of laughter.

"You are very gay this morning, Miss Nannie!"

"What! you?"

And she stopped to shake hands with a dark-complexioned, handsome young fellow, with a heavy drooping mustache, the true American mustache.

"Yes, I am late this morning, and I was running, but not much faster than you. Are you going back home? May I accompany you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Grant. How we danced last evening!"

And the two young people, while walking briskly beside each other, began chatting about the trifles of their social life. It never occurred to them to be brilliant, to make an attempt at wit. Mr. Grant had never taken the attitude of a lover; they gossiped like two good comrades, took pleasure in doing so—and that was all. The young man, an almost briefless barrister, was poor. Miss Fairfax was very rich. But they were equals all the same and dealt as power with power. They were the best friends in the world.

When the young lawyer had left Nannie at her father's door, he turned back for an instant. The house of Mr. Fairfax, a real palace, extended in all the splendor of its pompous architecture opposite the lake, and the pleasing silhouette of Nannie was disappearing under an imposing portico. Jack Grant heaved a little sigh.

"It is a pity!" he muttered. Possibly he was thinking of the great Fairfax fortune, his own poverty, and the charm of the young girl. Finally he shook his head in a determined manner, and went away to his office on the other side of the river.

CHAPTER III.

MARQUIS DE SAINBRILLAT SEEKS "AN AMERICAN FOR EXPORTATION."

Chicago is a very agreeable city to live in during the summer. Winter is frightfully cold, spring is detestable, but in June it is good to be there. The great heats are tempered by winds from the prairies or breezes from the lake, and if the days are sometimes scorching, the nights are cool and refreshing; but this does not prevent Chicagoans "who are anybody" from hastening away from the lake as soon as July arrives.

Mrs. Fairfax had hired for the season at Newport a princely mansion which, by an affectation of simplicity, was called a "cottage." The rent was exorbitant,

but she congratulated herself upon having taken it at any price. The house belonged to an American woman who was traveling in Europe. The one in question was wonderfully well situated, high up on the cliff, in the finest part of Bellevue Avenue. But do not imagine that it was the superb view which attracted Mrs. Fairfax. No; this consideration was certainly not to be despised, but it was secondary. There are not many houses to let on Bellevue Avenue; the fortunate owners of these famous "cottages" nearly all belong to the famous "four hundred," the four hundred privileged persons who count, among the thousands of rich people who besiege Newport every year, who keep to themselves, who set the fashion, and are, in fact, "society." Mrs. Fairfax had never quite belonged to the four hundred; at most she was the four-hundred-andfirst. That state of things was about to change. Thanks to this superb mansion,

situated in just the right spot, where she would receive, where her daughter, who was going to Newport for the first time since making her début, would certainly eclipse the daughters of other mothers, her success was not doubtful.

Watering-place life on the coast, in the United States, bears not the slightest resemblance to the idea we get of it at Dieppe or Trouville, not to mention the adorable little nooks where families go to take their ease during the vacations. At Newport the magnificent beach is empty, or nearly so. Children do not play there, nor do women install themselves with books or embroidery. That is not "the thing." In the land of liberty, social tyranny is a tyranny which one does not discuss.

In the morning one goes to the Casino, a building as big as it is ugly, at a little distance from the sea. Women, already in full dress, establish themselves in

sympathetic groups around an immense interior court, a sort of patio. There is a garden, also, for lawn-tennis or croquet players. But, in general, nobody does anything; one looks, one criticises, one takes care not to allow one's self to be approached too closely by men or women whom one ought not to know. It is not very amusing; but it is what one ought to do, it is the thing. In the evening there is dancing at the Casino. These are not mere unimportant hops, but real balls, with great luxury and superb and incessantly renewed toilettes. One of the greatest difficulties at Newport or at Saratoga is to find space enough for the innumerable trunks brought by the fair visitors.

One morning, therefore, Mrs. and Miss Fairfax, surrounded by a few intimate friends, were at their post, while Mlle. Durand, seated at a little distance, watched the sport of her two pupils.

"Look," exclaimed Nannie, "our governess has found an admirer. He is not very bad-looking. One would think he is talking French."

A young man, fashionable enough, although dressed somewhat more carelessly than the majority of young Americans, girded up in their buttoned vests, had, in fact, stopped for an instant, and was chatting with Mlle. Durand. Presently he bowed and went away. He looked as if he were rather bored, and seemed not to know anybody.

A few minutes later, Mlle. Durand came up to Nannie and said to her with a slight smile:

"I told you beforehand that the Marquis de Sainbrillat would be polite, but not more than polite, to his sister's former governess."

"Was that the marquis? And you did not present him?" said Mrs. Fairfax, in a tone of great annoyance. "I could not permit myself to do so, madame. But M. de Sainbrillat is going to the ball this evening with a friend, Mr. Lawrence—whom I think you know. The presentation will take place in the usual way."

All day long, Nannie scoffed at her mother's over-excitement with the absolute unconstraint which characterizes young America.

In the privacy of her own soul, Mrs. Fairfax was profoundly humiliated by what her daughter called their "misgo," their "four" in Paris. Plainly she had maneuvered unskilfully. She and her daughter had been lost in the crowd. The question now was to regain their place. The excellent Mrs. Fairfax, who was as good as possible, and where other things were concerned, perfectly judicious, had been bitten by the craze for grandeur, the adoration of titles, more than the majority of her countrywomen—and that

is saying a great deal. To hear her daughter called "princess" like that minx of a Bostonian who lived next door and refused to know them, or duchess, or even marquise! Could human felicity go further? She did not want for a son-in-law a simple Mr. So-and-so, and she found it difficult to forgive her husband for recalling them before the mellifluous title had been found. But here, since the mountain could not go to Mahomet, Mahomet had come to the mountain! All the same, what a good notion it had been to take a house at Newport!

present the Marquis de Sainbrillat? He remembers having met you two years ago

in an American salon at Paris."

A vague bow on the part of the young girl, a half smile, a name inscribed on a dancing card already very full. Nothing else.

In this brief moment when each had preserved an attitude absolutely correct, even cool, they had had the time to say to themselves: "There is the future Marquise de Sainbrillat. She is really pretty." And: "Curious that there should be so little difference between a marquis and the first comer who asked me to dance. He is certainly not badlooking." And, carried off by her partner in the waltz, she vanished in the crowd. He, presented to another young girl by his faithful friend, Lawrence, played the amiable to her. Comparing her with Nannie, he thought her almost ugly, as common as possible with her exaggerated toilette and her strident voice. He knew that she came from San Francisco, and that her father, a workman twenty years before, was incredibly rich. She displayed a naïve audacity toward him, striving to engross his attention, and talking at random. He was very well

pleased when the waltz was over and she was carried off by another partner. For him, he went and sat down in a corner and looked at the scene so new to him, seeking in every direction the lovely profile of Miss Fairfax.

Robert de Sainbrillat was thirty years old. Launched very early in Parisian life, he had not only committed many follies but left behind him many illusions.

Poor among very wealthy people, in debt, often humiliated, he had arrived at the conclusion that as money is the only really powerful thing at present, it would be ridiculous not to procure the thing if it were possible. The only means to obtain it, when one belongs to a certain circle, being marriage, it was necessary for him to marry as advantageously as he could. As this was likewise the opinion of persons whom he respected infinitely, of his mother whom he adored and who, in all other matters, was scrupulously

delicate, he did not blush in the least at his chase after the "big pennies." Through the force of circumstances, this chase had dollars for its object, and dollars were worth more than big pennies. As to the way in which this hunt had been organized, the intelligent puffing of the American journals, the funds placed at his disposal by his brother-in-law the baron, he did not disturb himself at all. These details did not concern him in the least. What had annoyed him, for example, were the preliminaries of his presentation to Miss Fairfax, the tiresome weeks spent in New York, where he knew scarcely any one; the necessity of being particular about his conduct, for he knew America well enough to be certain that the slightest scandal would close all doors against him.

By a division of consciousness which is not infrequent, this young man who had no scruples about the trade of a dowryhunter, was very capable of good sentiments and even of generosity; he was faithful to his friends, obliging, in a word, "a good fellow." Moreover, he was goodhumored, excellent company, and very much petted in the circles he frequented. Although rather too pale, too thin, too narrow-shouldered, he was nevertheless good-looking; his eyes did not lack vivacity and his small upward curling mustaches gave him a look of Henri trois which sufficiently specialized him. Besides, he knew how to wear a dress-coat, a slight detail not without its importance in the case of a marriageable young man.

As soon as his turn came, the marquis offered his arm to Miss Fairfax, and they walked up and down the ballroom while awaiting the prelude to their waltz. The marquis had observed that during the interval between dances the young girls were by no means deposited at the

side of their mothers like bundles which one is in haste to get rid of. Nannie was charming; she was slightly flushed, and she wore a delightful gown of white tulle unornamented save by natural roses; no young French girl could have been more simply dressed. Coming after the Californian with her robe of violent red, Robert found this exquisite.

Nannie, knowing but too well what to say to this foreigner, looked at him a moment and then opened her lips.

"No, mademoiselle. I entreat you," said Robert softly, "not that question. Permit me to reply without having heard it. I like your country very much—it is admirable; in studying it, I recognize its immense superiority over the Old World. Now that I have paid my tribute of admiration, let us talk of something else, will you? Consider that, within the last month, I have made the same profession of faith on nineteen hundred different occasions.

The negro barber at my hotel must be reckoned among the nineteen hundred patriots."

Nannie laughed gayly. The ice was broken.

"In spite of your enthusiasm for my country, you looked extremely bored this morning, M. de Sainbrillat."

"I had not then had the honor of being presented to you, mademoiselle."

"Ah! Among us, it is necessary to be well and properly presented. You see, we are a trifle suspicious. There was an Italian duke who made quite a sensa ion here some years ago; he was entertained, invited, made much of—and then it was discovered one fine day that he was merely a stylish valet-de-chambre who had appropriated both the clothes of his master and his title."

"Be easy, mademoiselle—I have stolen nothing. The fashionable society of Newport is satisfied now, since my sister's former governess has recognized me. It is very flattering."

"What could you expect? The journals have been puffing you as if you were the son of a pretender to the throne. That rouses a certain suspicion in prudent people."

"And not unreasonably. I have often wondered why the newspapers paid so much attention to my very unimportant self. There was a *Herald* reporter on board and it amused me to talk with him. He was a very clever fellow. I have always fancied that he was making 'copy' out of me, for lack of anything better. That is quite sufficient to make the reputation of a toothpowder or a Parisian."

This was said with such simplicity, with such an easy grace, that to doubt the veracity of the marquis would have been impossible. Nannie, however, was very clear-sighted, and she desired further

information. Like many of her compatriots, she had a mania for putting precise questions, for giving homethrusts:

"I have lived in Paris a little; I was educated, in part, at least, in France. So I know how Parisians, those belonging to a certain set especially, adore the boulevard. What a droll idea it was for you to quit your dear asphalt to study our republican manners, when you have a Republic of your own!"

"Oh! such a little one!"

Then he reflected: "Upon my word, I believe she is catechising me." And he added very tranquilly:

"It was not merely to hunt the bison that I came to America. My family and my friends advised me to travel; a stupid duel—fortunately with no worse result than a scratch—had made me talked about. I had always desired to see the United States; instead of going to Switzer-

land for the summer I sailed for New York—and here I am."

He had a very cheerful, very unaffected smile, and Nannie smiled in return. Decidedly, he pleased her.

"Did you know many of my countrywomen in Paris?"

"A certain number; I always sought them, they dance so well! Besides, you are aware, mademoiselle, that the American girl is very much the style with us. Our modern young girls pique themselves on resembling you."

"I know," said Nannie, maliciously.
"Every time I saw a particularly ill-bred
French girl, with vile manners and talking
loud, some one took care to say to me:
'She is very American.' I was presented
to one of those charming persons; she
stared me out of countenance, and then
calmly turned her back on me."

"Ah! do not judge our young girls by such a villainous specimen."

"Have no fear of it. I know charming ones. It is just the same as if you should judge us by certain insupportable, loud-voiced Americans whom one meets when traveling, and who try to make everybody give way to them. There, like that one who just ran against us. That is the American girl for exportation."

The "American for exportation" was none other than the flamboyant Californian.

After a few turns in the waltz, the young people stopped by a common impulse and began to chat again.

"Will you take pity on me, mademoiselle, and guide me a little in this society so new to me?"

"Certainly, with great pleasure, although I am not a very experienced pilot."

"I have been told that it is of the first importance to enter only certain circles. A shake-hands given to the wrong person is enough to ruin a man with you." "I should think so! To know anybody who is not thoroughly 'in society' why, you might better commit a little crime."

"Even though I told you that a foreigner models himself on your democratic manners!"

"Do not be sarcastic. It is very serious. In America, one may commit a hundred incongruities a day without ever suspecting it. For example, to cross a street on the bias, instead of walking to the end of the pavement; to carry your handkerchief in your hand, through pure thoughtlessness, in the street; to ask for the second joint of a fowl instead of saying 'dark meat'; to walk where you ought not to walk, or not to show yourself where you ought to be seen. On Sundays, for instance, after divine service, at which you must piously be present, people promenade the Cliff Walk in their very best clothes. It is a Longchamps

defile, only, not on horseback. The horses keep Sunday here, and remain religiously in their stables. Oh! it is very complicated, very difficult. There ought to be a course in worldliness to follow that in philosophy. The only hard thing would be to keep up with it. What is the correct thing here one year is not so the next; new regulations, just as imperative, are coming up every day. What I tell you is true, at this moment; I will not promise you that it will be so six months from now."

"But what a Chinese puzzle your etiquette must be!"

"I should think so! That is what makes us grow old so fast. There is good reason for it."

"Point out to me, I beg you, the persons whom I ought to avoid. That lady over there, for example, so austerely dressed and looking so very glum?"

"Ah! what a mistake to make! That

person! Why that is the woman in all Newport that I am most anxious to know, and I shall never succeed. That is the cream of the cream; that is the princess."

"What? a princess?"

"Why, yes; she is from Boston, Boston the unapproachable, and the very flower of Boston, into the bargain! She married the Prince de Pierlé, about fifteen years ago; she is spending the summer here with her mother, who is old and out of health. They have the cottage next to ours, and whenever we happen to meet, they are always looking at something over our heads which prevents them from noticing our presence."

"Then, there are people who refuse to know you, just as—"

"As there are those whom I do not bow to. Precisely."

"And you call yourselves republicans?"

"One thing does not prevent the other. Politically, in theory, my chambermaid is my equal. In reality, I pay her wages and do not invite her to my table."

"But that young person in red, the American for exportation?"

"Loulou Smith? I beg you to believe that I would sooner invite my chamber-maid to my table than that girl, who has more millions than she can count on the fingers of her right hand. Millions of dollars, naturally."

Marquis Robert turned almost giddy. That meant twenty-five millions of francs. Few things escaped Nannie, and she caught as it were the reflection of that giddiness. However, the young man recovered himself in a moment, and Miss Fairfax wondered afterward if she had really seen anything.

Their promenade brought them near the inaccessible princess. She was a woman still young, but so thin, so faded, so

absolutely devoid of expression, that it was not easy to fancy that she had ever been young and fair. And yet she had once been famous for her beauty. She was still very distinguished in appearance and admirably dressed, but severely and in black, making a spot in this assembly where colors of every shade blended in confusion.

"I had a slight acquaintance with the Prince de Pierlé. He was rather a bad lot."

"That does not surprise me," said the American girl with great calmness; "a man who marries a woman for her money is generally a wretch."

At this moment the young girl was claimed by another dancer; but, at the urgent entreaty of the marquis, she allowed him to write his name once more on her card.

"By-and-by I will present you to mamma," said she. "We give a gardenparty to-morrow, and I want her to invite you."

When Mrs. and Miss Fairfax left the ball, Nannie gave her mother a good mark.

"You were perfect, mamma. You see, I was afraid you would show too much eagerness, you have such a weakness for titles. But no, you were just amiable, and nothing more."

"You flatter me. Young girls nowadays are very indulgent to their parents. He looks very well, you know, this marquis."

"He is not so very bad; narrow in the shoulders, though; he could not stand up long in a good boxing match. There will be a crowd to-morrow; all Newport knows that he is coming, and you saw yourself that before the ball was over everybody wanted to know him. I launched him. He will have a howling success among our young people—all the more that

men dancers are not plenty. Loulou Smith herself sat out several dances. That pleased me!"

Nannie, who never "sat out" was not usually ferocious; but she did not love Miss Loulou Smith's red gowns.

CHAPTER IV.

A DANCE TO MADEMOISELLE'S MUSIC.

THE next day, Mlle. Durand was studying through her closed window-blinds the animated and very charming spectacle presented by the garden of Mrs. Fairfax. But it was not the sight of the fashionable women in fresh toilettes and of the fashionable men who were paying court to them, which delighted the French governess. Her eyes followed Marquis Robert approvingly, and an enigmatic smile never left her thin lips. There she was, relegated to her corner, not even dreaming of mingling with those fortunate beings, and yet feeling herself far above them all, much more intelligent, infinitely superior; she said to herself with inward satisfaction:

"And yet it is I who pull the strings of all those puppets!" And then, having remarked that the Marquis de Sainbrillat, with perfect tact, made no parade of exaggerated attention to Nannie, that he was exquisitely polite to elderly women, and was the mark at which all the young women were aiming, Mlle. Durand sat down at her desk and commenced a letter with these words:

"All is going well, madame la marquise."

All was going well, in truth. After a time of trial in New York, Robert found the new life that was opening before him delightful. He adored luxury. He felt as if he were in his stall at the *Vaudeville* or the *Gymnase*, admiring the actresses, each of whom was seeking to surpass all others in the cut of her gown and the iridescence of her silks and satins. True, many of these women were too elegant, made too great a display for a daylight party, under a June sky, in the soft, some-

what enervating air of Newport; but the spectacle was none the less delightful to the eye on that account. It pleased him, nevertheless, that Nannie wore a white woolen gown, which, if it betrayed the hand of a skilful artist, was still very simple, and trimmed merely with a little gilt braid; a large white straw hat, adorned with a little gold thread which reminded one of the trimming of the dress, completed a toilette which was undoubtedly the most simple of all in the assembly. The marquis thought the young girl still prettier than on the previous evening. He even felt quite disposed to fall in love with her. As for that, the difficulty with him was not in falling in love, but in remaining there.

Hence, as Nannie had predicted, the Parisian had a real success. Like children who prefer to play with the toys of others, American women, who have no titles in their own country, delight in playing with

foreign ones. Nannie usually said M. de Sainbrillat; her friends gave him the "marquis," or rivaled each other with "monsieur le marquis." Those who did not speak French, and to whom Robert rattled off glibly half a dozen phrases of bad English, translated the title and called him marguess. One of these young girls, in the expansiveness of her enthusiastic nature, declared to her friend Nannie that the Frenchman was just lovely! To that young person this seemed a trifle exaggerated; but at heart she was flattered by the success of him who was already called "Nannie Fairfax's marquis."

A garden-party, when one has looked all about one, when a few fanatics have begun playing croquet, when one has gone several times to the buffet—that of Mrs. Fairfax, installed under a large tent, was almost too well supplied—begins to languish. The very pretty garden was

somewhat too small for the crowd which thronged it; in the end, people began to feel bored.

In the adjoining garden, separated from that of Mrs. Fairfax merely by a hedge and a few scattered trees, the Princess de Pierlé, as usual severely costumed in a gray gown without trimming, was reading to her mother, a poor invalid extended on a couch. The strident noise of the American voices disturbed this austere person. Now and then she adjusted an eyeglass and glanced haughtily at the struggling crowd of men and women who fancied they were enjoying themselves. Once, while chatting with the marquis, Nannie felt this cold regard weigh upon her; she shivered slightly; it seemed as if this sad and haughty woman were casting a chill shadow upon her young happiness. But Nannie was not a coward; she gave back glance for glance, pride for pride, and Mme. de Pierlé was the first to lower

her eyes. The marquis noticed a change come over the expressive countenance of the young girl; he merely thought that the *ennui* he was himself beginning to experience was gaining upon her as well.

"Mademoiselle, would you not like to take the stiffness out of all these people who can find nothing more to say? When tongues grow stiff, legs must be put in motion. Let us improvise a dance."

"What a good idea! Only, Monsieur de Sainbrillat, you have just committed an enormity. You said 'legs,' as if we had any 'legs' in America!"

"What is it, then, that you trip about so nicely on?" They began to laugh gayly. But the young girl came to a sudden pause.

"And the music?" said she. "It would take too long to send for violins."

"Well! What do you do with Mlle. Durand? She plays Strauss's waltzes admirably. She made us dance finely at the house. We put our governess into all the sauces."

"I know."

"Ah! Did she tell you anything very bad about us? I can assure you, nevertheless, mademoiselle, that we are not monsters."

But Nannie had run off. She came unexpectedly upon Mlle. Durand, who had not time to draw a blank sheet over the page she was writing.

"Mademoiselle, will you be an angel?"

"That is to say, Nannie, that you are going to impose an unpleasant task on me."

"Exactly. Our garden-party is becoming tiresome. The marquis has proposed a dance, and—"

"And it is I who must make you dance?"

"How intelligent you are, mademoiselle! That will not tire you more than writing. You can make literature of it—unless you are writing your memoirs."

"My memoirs, which would be chiefly the memoirs of others, will not lack piquancy, I can assure you. You will occupy a fine place in them."

"How amusing that will be! Write them, and read them to me, I beg of you."

"Meanwhile, let me slip on a suitable gown. I will follow you in five minutes."

When the young girl had departed, still running, the governess said to herself: "All the same, I will lock the door next time. She would only have had to cast her eyes for an instant—her eyes see everything!—and it would have been all up with my castles in Spain. She is not without pride, the little savage."

CHAPTER V.

THE PRINCESS WARNS NANNIE.

The success of the Marquis de Sainbrillat in Newport society was beyond dispute a few weeks later. People snatched him away from one another. No country party, no ball, no reunion of any description would have succeeded without the presence of the young Frenchman. His unaffected kindliness, his animation, his smiling gaiety, all were applauded. Moreover, he had quickly accommodated himself to American habits. None of their own countrymen treated young girls with more chivalrous respect. He knew how to accompany with a charmingly turned compliment the flowers

which he sent them in perfectly impartial rotation. He caracoled, he wheeled and pranced his excellent hired steed at the side of the young horsewomen. gave to right and left, like a great lord, to every charitable collection, and spent his brother-in-law's money with a grace that was superb. On Sundays he punctually attended as far as the door of the temple which his principles forbade him to enter, the pretty devotees whose religion was a religion adorned, clothed by Worth or by Doucet. He went oftenest with Miss Fairfax, carrying her prayerbook and accommodating his pace to hers. Sometimes, however, he offered his homage to another beauty, and then people talked about it. Nannie, always surrounded, never appeared to notice this desertion; gay and gracious, she seemed to ask nothing from life but sunlight and the smiles of those who looked at her. At heart she was convinced that the attentions of the young Parisian were none the less significant for being discreet. When he spoke to her, even on indifferent matters, his voice assumed tender, caressing inflections. Evidently, he was very deeply smitten.

And she?

She did not like to ask herself that question. Ill at ease, she was defending herself. She was well pleased with her life as a young girl; she was so happy, so petted, that she was fain to retain her haughty liberty awhile longer. Her mother, amazed at seeing her dream realized in this manner, had not the slightest doubt that Nannie was as much in love with the attractive foreigner as he seemed to be with her. Probably he would make his declaration before they left Newport. Already her fancy depicted the superb wedding she would arrange in Chicago; she enjoyed in advance the comments of the newspapers which would describe the

bridal presents, the trousseau, and especially the beauty of the bride.

She could hear herself saying to all and sundry: "My daughter, the Marquise de Sainbrillat." The difference of religions rather annoyed her; but on the whole, mixed marriages sometimes turned out very well; besides, that could be considered afterward. Certainly, she had too much respect for individual liberty to seek to influence her daughter's decisions. But there are indirect ways of exerting influence. She was incessant in her praises of the marquis, to whom she was charmingly attentive. In her private conversations with Nannie she talked of the future as if it were already a settled thing. Mlle. Durand, thanks to her relations with the Sainbrillat family, became a very important personage in the house; she was consulted and treated with even more respect than formerly. This malicious person was infinitely amused. As

to the marquis, he never failed to inquire ceremoniously about her health, nor she to make an equally ceremonious reply. Occasionally, however, between these words which everybody could hear, there slipped swiftly a bit of whispered advice to which he religiously attended and by which he profited.

And yet, the summer months glided by in the gilded monotony of Newport, and the marquis made no progress. Always charming, evidently smitten, there were days when he seemed to be trying to tear himself away from a presence that was too dear; when he appeared to be paying as much attention to Loulou almost Smith, for example, as to Nannie. On one occasion, Mrs. Fairfax, greatly annoyed by his refusal to come to dinner on the pretext of a previous invitation, expressed herself with a little sharpness concerning this intermittent lover. Mlle. Durand, who was in a corner with her embroidery, said quietly, without lifting her eyes:

"Consider, madame, that the Marquis de Sainbrillat is not very rich, and that dowry-hunters are numerous in both the Old World and the New, and that Nannie would be a desirable prey for them. I have told you plainly that under his apparent worldliness, Marquis Robert has a very haughty spirit."

And this refusal to dine at the house of Mrs. Fairfax advanced Robert's affair more than the most assiduous attentions could have done.

At last, the day of departure was named. Mr. Fairfax, whom his business detained in Chicago, had visited Newport very infrequently. The marquis did not please him. He wanted a son-in-law whose language he could speak, and whose career he knew all about.

This Frenchman, who was said to have

come to hunt on the prairies, and who was playing the fine fellow in the midst of vain and idle women, must himself be vain and idle. However, he was too absolutely an American not to leave his daughter the most absolute freedom; her marriage was her own affair; if she should not marry at all he would have felt a secret satisfaction, for he loved her animation, her gay and candid temper, and the paternal residence would be very desolate without Nannie. In any case, that concerned herself. But he made it perfectly plain that whoever married Nannie would marry her for herself; that he reserved it to himself to give Nannie whatever he chose; that as to a dowry settled in advance, there was not the slightest reason to anticipate it. wife's remarks concerning European customs in the matter had no effect upon him. He urged their return to Chicago, where he longed to see the house once

more full of life after the long silence of summer.

For that matter, everybody was going away; the Princess de Pierlé and her mother like the others. One morning Nannie saw the princess, in a traveling dress, walking slowly in the garden, as if taking leave of it, while the men servants were cording the trunks. The young girl was amazed when the princess stopped near the hedge and said to her:

"Miss Fairfax, will you give me the pleasure of chatting with you a few moments?"

Nannie, merely bowing, entered the adjoining garden and sat down on a bench near Mme. de Pierlé. Throughout the entire season her ambition, like that of her mother, had been to make the acquaintance of the inaccessible Bostonian, and now that the latter spoke to her in her gentle voice, she experienced more agitation than pleasure.

The princess had often been praised for her exquisite voice; people constantly quoted, with reference to her, the line:

"Her voice was ever gentle, soft and low; an excellent thing in woman."

Naturally, the voice grew lower with each new compliment. Now it was hardly more than an audible breath. Nannie, accustomed to the loud and strident accents of her companions, had to incline her head to hear this silvery murmur. The princess no longer made gestures; her extremely thin hands, overburdened with rings—it was the only mark of bad taste of which this distinguished woman could be accused—were lightly crossed and remained motionless.

"You must have been very much surprised, mademoiselle, at my calling you. I had no right to do so, since I am a mere stranger. I am going away presently, and we shall doubtless never meet again.

But something that is stronger than my will forces me to speak."

"I thank you, madame, whatever may be your motive. From you I expect nothing but what is good to listen to."

The ghost of a smile flitted across the pale lips of Mme. de Pierlé, and she looked frankly at the young girl. Nannie saw then that her eyes were still wonderfully beautiful, and that an expression of infinite kindness and compassion lay hidden in their depths.

"Miss Fairfax, you are very pretty, very fresh, very glad to be alive. You seem to me the incarnation of what is best in our race: frankness, energy, fulness of life. That is why a great compassion has come over me in looking at you."

"Madame!"

"I know I have no right to say to you: 'Be on your guard!' But, my child, permit me to tell you my story. Oh! do

not be alarmed, it shall be in very few words; at bottom, my history is very simple. I was about your age, I was going forward into life with your own fine courage. It seemed very natural to me to marry a great noble, for I felt myself in every respect his equal. On returning from our wedding journey, my husband said to me in nearly these words: 'Madame, you have bought my title with your money; it is yours. But that is the extent of the bargain. My friends are not anxious to receive you, nor am I anxious to present you to them. You do not form part of our society and nothing could enable you to do so. I resume my liberty. You have a house in Paris and a château in the country; I advise you to remain in the country as much as possible.' I did not resign myself at once. When I had a son—he is dead now—I hoped through him to regain the place which was my due. In fact, I was

received in several salons—as a foreigner. My husband parading his contempt for a woman who, as he said, was not "to the manner born," the others did not feel bound to admit me into their ranks. He committed other faults against me of which I will not speak. The struggle lasted for several years; it was too much for me, and I gave it up. I had lost my former friends, who had been carefully discarded at the time of my marriage. Hence I was alone, and alone I have remained. I assure you, Miss Fairfax, that this life of isolation in the midst of a crowd is a very torture."

"But, madame, why do you tell these painful things to me?"

"You know why. A foreigner, a man who is neither of your country nor your social circle, is paying court to you—the prince also pretended to be a lover. He came to America expressly in search of the fortune which he could not find at

home, your own possibly, guided in his search by precise information. Your mother is crazy about his title; you are very much tempted. If you care for your happiness, marry a Smith, a Brown, no matter whom, provided he loves you sincerely, with all his soul and strength, and would be proud to call you his! But do not marry the Marquis Robert de Sainbrillat."

"Do you know him, princess? Do you know anything wrong in him?"

"No, I do not know him. Only, I sometimes see his name in certain journals; the set he lives in indicates sufficiently the style of his life. I also know that he has many debts."

"But, after all," cried Nannie, "all marriages between Frenchmen and American girls do not turn out like yours."

"That is true. Few men are so abominable as my husband. Mine is an extreme case. There is a sort of imitation happi-

ness even in marriages contracted through interest on one side and vanity on the other. There is real happiness in certain marriages where there are neither titles nor great fortunes; where the union is absolute, in spite of differences of nationality. But such cases are rare. In this life one ought never to count upon exceptions."

There was a brief silence. Nannie could not speak; nor could she be certain whether it were indignation or gratitude which stifled her. She felt as if she had been suddenly shown a precipice on whose edge she had been walking unaware. The princess rose. The carriage was waiting for her; her mother must be ready.

"I could not go away without saying what I have just said. Probably it will be of no use, since it is probably too late. But, at any rate, my conscience is clear. Adieu, Miss Fairfax."

Nannie looked at the sorrowful face,

faded before the time, and yet still beautiful; and she knew that the poor woman had spoken truly, that her life was a long suffering. Tears sprang to the young girl's eyes, and obeying her impulsive nature, Nannie exclaimed:

"Will you permit me to embrace you?"

The Bostonian was willing to overlook this vehemence of the child of the prairies, and graciously allowed herself to be embraced. Then, as she was turning

away, she said:

"Reflect on it-I entreat you to reflect."

The marquis could not understand the rather cool reception which awaited him at the "cottage." Nannie did not understand the art of appearing gay when she felt sad—which seldom happened—nor of looking any part she did not feel. Her social education was very incomplete.

They were to go away the next day. Robert was paying his farewell call. Under the pretext of telling Mlle. Durand some news, he remained a short time beside her. Then, with perfect politeness, he bade good-by to Mrs. and Miss Fairfax. As for him, he was going to Maryland with his friend Lawrence to shoot canvasback ducks. If he were not recalled to France, he would continue his travels in this very interesting country, and naturally, Chicago would not be omitted from his itinerary. He would then have the great pleasure of seeing his friends once more—if they would permit him to call them so. In any case, he would never forget the charming hospitality which had been accorded to him, a foreigner.

And that was all.

The return to Chicago was not at all gay. Mrs. Fairfax, usually very eventempered and gentle, flew into a bad humor several times and made things rather unpleasant for those around her. Nannie, very silent, was thinking. She told herself that the princess might have

spared her advice. Marquis Robert was not seeking her dollars. Mlle. Durand, on the other hand, was in a truly angelic temper.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRUGGLE 'TWIXT HEART AND REASON.

Six weeks elapsed without word from the marquis. From time to time the journals mentioned his doings and sayings, but with less exuberance than on his arrival. Nannie, who usually professed much scorn for the public press, now studied the newspapers rather assiduously. Mlle. Durand discreetly said as much to Mrs. Fairfax; she added:

"Do you not think, madame, that Nannie has been rather pale of late? She is certainly not in such fine condition as she was in Newport."

This was translated as follows by Mrs. Fairfax in a subsequent conjugal conversation:

"I do not wish to see my daughter die of love!"

To which her husband very judiciously and calmly replied:

"We could hardly ask this monsieur to be so kind as to marry Nannie. As to dying, she has several times asked me for another slice of roast beef, and I think there is no imminent danger."

Mrs. Fairfax was almost displeased with her daughter's good appetite, which nothing impaired. Nannie was not at all etherial; the healthy vigor of her twenty years manifested itself not merely in her love of movement, of dancing, and sport, but also at table. The generation of young misses who drank vinegar to lose flesh and devoured cakes between meals, in order to seem to make an appearance at the latter for form's sake only, is happily passed away.

And yet, it was plain that the young girl was less cheerful than formerly.

One October morning, the fine weather decided Nannie to take a walk. As usual, she turned toward the park. If Jack Grant had met her this time, he would not have complimented her on her laugh. She was thoughtful, and walked beside the lake with measured steps. True, the season was not the same. It was autumn, that red and gold autumn which is so marvelously beautiful in the New World. The brilliancy of the sunlight sifted through a slight haze; nevertheless the sky was very blue in spots, and the air was sweet to breathe. But with the golden haze a vague melancholy diffused itself over the lake, like a thought of death in the midst of life, the forerunner of approaching winter, the cold and cruel winter, so full of suffering for the disinherited of earth.

She was vaguely admiring the familiar spectacle of the trees in the park: the brilliant red of the maples, the gold, the velvety browns, mingled with green, of the other trees, when she suddenly stopped and felt her heart beat rapidly. The marquis, holding out his hands, was coming toward her, radiant, changed altogether by the joy that showed itself in his face.

"What happiness!" he exclaimed. "I arrived last evening. I dared not present myself before the usual hour, and here I meet you, I see you once more. If you knew—"

He retained her two hands in his, as if he could not master his emotion. Then, recovering himself, he said, smiling:

"Do not be vexed with me if I forget a little of the rigorous etiquette you have tried in vain to teach me."

"I am not vexed with you," replied Nannie simply.

If he were not in love, she did not know the signs. As for her, sincerely pleased to see him again, much flattered by the

admiration so plainly visible in his eyes, she nevertheless felt her uneasiness return, and recoiled as if in presence of danger. And yet his silence, his prolonged absence, had annoyed her. After the first moment of real emotion, she once more became thoughtful. He felt that she was escaping him.

Thereupon, in the most natural way in the world, he began describing his travels, his hunting expeditions, and vaguely hinted of penetrating into the great prairies while the fine weather lasted.

They were now on their way back to the house. Nannie seemed unwilling to prolong her walk. The mist had disappeared; the lake was glittering under a burning sun which made it very warm.

"Do you love your lake very much, Miss Nannie?"

"Very much. In the first place because whatever they may say of our flat landscape, this great lake is beautiful. You should see it when it is enraged! It is superb then; very dangerous, too, for the storms here are as sudden as they are violent. Then I have always lived near my lake; not on the bank as we do now, for when I was a child this part of the shore was almost deserted, or else covered by frightful hovels; but I often walked here. One of my first recollections, a frightful one, too, is connected with the very spot, I think, where we are now standing."

"May I ask what it is?"

Nannie stopped for an instant, looking at the fine mansions on her right, and then on her left at the sparkling sheet of water.

"I do not like much to think of it, and, especially, to speak of it. Sometimes I wonder that my nature is so gay when my conscious life opened with such a horror. My parents were absent at the time of the great fire which destroyed

almost the entire city; they had left me in care of my grandmother, who adored me. I can still recall her looks distinctly; she was still beautiful and very elegant. When the fire started on the other side of the river, it never occurred to those who lived on this side that there could be any danger at such a distance. The wind was blowing a gale. At last, the news reached my grandmother that the fire had crossed the river at one bound, that the bridges were burning, the streets like ribbons of fire, the houses, many of which were built of wood, burning like matches, others sinking into the incredible furnace, and that the fire continued to come nearer.

"She had believed herself in perfect safety; her house stood in the middle of a large square planted with trees, which scarcely pretended to be a garden, and which we called a 'yard.' Nevertheless she ordered the carriage to be got ready, and packed several bundles. The frenzied domestics had escaped, taking the horses with them. At such a moment, when disaster comes with the swiftness of lightning, there is no longer either property or subordination, nothing—nothing but the instincts of the wild beast which flies when the woods are afire. Then my grandmother took me in her arms and ran. It was time. In turning round she saw her house burning. She was carried along with a crowd. No one knew where to go. In every direction there were barriers of flame; the intolerable heat drove back the human flood. Those who were wisest had escaped at the first alarm; all the rest found themselves in extreme danger. At last, there was no refuge but the lake. My grandmother entered the water with me in her arms. She was a frail woman, in delicate health, and accustomed to comfort. She remained in the water up to her waist, holding me

in such a way for seven hours that I was in the water very little; but when help arrived she was at the limit of her strength in spite of her prodigious energy. It seems that neither she nor the others who were in the same plight even dreamed of weeping or complaining. They were watching the city burn. I remember seeing a little girl running on the shore whose long yellow hair was afire. I do not know whether she was saved. Sparks and scorching hot fragments carried by the furious wind fell on us and around us. Then we would stoop down and let the water extinguish the kindling fire. People rendered each other these mutual services in silence, quite naturally. Each of the women surrounding us had tried to save something from the disaster. I can still see one who stood near us; she clutched between her fingers, certainly without knowing what it was, a switch of false hair. Another had a child's shoe.

No one felt surprised at anything. Everything took place as in a frightful nightmare."

Nannie paused, as if haunted by these sinister images.

"Forgive me, mademoiselle. I never dreamed that you, who always seem to me the incarnation of happiness, had such sorrowful memories of child-hood."

"Make no excuses, marquis. Sometimes it is good to remind one's self that life is not a continual pleasure party. My grandmother died a year after the fire. She was still young the day before it happened, she was old the day after. Very few persons, comparatively, perished in the fire; many died in consequence of the cold, terror, and their moral and physical sufferings. In fine,—but let us talk of something else, will you? At what hour will you call upon us? Mamma will be very happy to receive you. I

think, to be quite honest with you, that it has rather annoyed her that you should have given us no sign of life. Mamma is not always reasonable."

She was seeking to recover her gaiety, the slightly sarcastic accent which it pleased her to affect, but without complete success. The marquis remained perfectly grave.

"I am grateful for her annoyance. Only, I would not venture to tell her that during these long weeks I have been struggling with all my might."

"Struggling? How so?"

"My reason said to me: 'Go back to France.' My heart struggled against it. I ought to have listened to my reason, but I was not able. Good-by for the present, Miss Nannie. I shall have the honor to present myself at your house toward three o'clock."

And, as if he mortally regretted his semi-confidence, he tore himself away

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from this too-beloved presence without giving Nannie time to question him.

Somewhat startled, she went into the house blushing, half happy, half annoyed.

CHAPTER VII.

NANNIE LEARNS THE CORONET MUST BE REGILDED.

PEOPLE said "Nannie Fairfax's marquis" more than ever. In the fashionable set of Chicago as in that of Newport, it seemed indisputable that if they were not as yet absolutely engaged, still the marriage of M. de Sainbrillat with Miss Fairfax must speedily take place. Nannie's friends, the young men who, though possibly not aspirants, had been strongly attracted by this charming young girl, kept at a marked distance from her in their reunions, leaving the marquis full liberty to chat or dance with his supposed betrothed. This did not displease him, but it secretly irritated her. The position

was a false one, and she did not know how to extricate herself from it.

She did not clearly understand this young man. That he was smitten with her, she doubted no more than the others did. Since the half avowal in which he said he had been vanquished in an internal struggle, he no longer concealed his wish to be always near her; he allowed his future mother-in-law to make much of him; he played with his future sisters-in-law; with Mr. Fairfax he was polite, but somewhat on his guard.

What disquieted Nannie was a nameless method in his advances, something that suggested a part learned by heart, though very well played. It was a well-planned siege, in which each day had its task, a bastion to demolish, a step to make in advance. Very frank and loyal herself, the young girl did not comprehend such tactics. If he loved her, why did he not say so? Then she would see whether,

on her side, she loved him well enough to put her hand in his and give him her life. Perhaps, after all, if she did not experience for the marquis the overwhelming passion described by the poets, that was doubtless because great passions are rare in this rather shabby world wherein the little things of life, such as dollars and titles, assume immense importance.

On his side, Robert enjoyed himself less in Chicago than he had in Newport. Although it is agreeable to pay court to a pretty girl, yet, as an occupation, it leaves many a tiresome gap to be filled. And the Frenchman hardly knew what to do with this spare time. At Newport he had met other idlers like himself and had somehow managed to "kill time." But in this monster of a city, where there is something feverish, something almost mad in the human activity displayed; where the bustle is so great that one is

continually being elbowed out of the way; where the men, old and young, after a hearty breakfast at eight in the morning, rush off to business and do not return until evening, tired out but contented, he did not find many donothings to make up a game of poker or a riding party into the country. For that matter, the country around Chicago is desperately flat and offers few attractions to cavaliers. The curiosities of Chicago, the enormous elevators, the chambers of commerce, the pork factories, where the hog enters alive at one door and goes out ready for the table at another—interesting things in themselves, assuredly—left this young representative of French nobility a trifle cold. Moreover, he stormed against the cooking at his hotel and declared that a nation which has the best game in the world, and the most excellent and abundant fruit and vegetables, and which excels in spoiling everything, thanks to

its kitchen ranges, is barbarous. A country which knows not how to make sauces and which eats its boiled eggs out of a glass is a doomed country.

Whenever he approached Mlle. Durand with his customary politeness to inquire after her health, he murmured in her ear:

"Ah! but I am bored! Six months of cant and American cooking is rather rough!"

"Patience. The father is difficult to manage, but in the end he will yield."

By which one sees that the conjugal conversations, in which Mrs. Fairfax, guided by the governess, pleaded the cause of the Old World which mistakenly cleaves to dowries, and sought to undermine her husband's resistance and extort a promise, had as yet accomplished nothing.

One day Nannie met Mlle. Durand at the foot of the stairs; the latter was just going out and held a letter in her hand.

Seeing Nannie, the governess looked disturbed, stumbled at the last step, and, in catching at the banister, dropped the letter. Nannie picked it up and returned it to her.

"What!" she exclaimed in surprise; "then you write to Mme. de Sainbrillat? I thought you had quarreled with her?"

Mlle. Durand was inwardly enraged at her awkwardness, but a misstep on the stairs was not the only thing she could turn to advantage. She replied with great coolness:

"We are no better friends than of old. But, you see, Nannie, in our old France parents are curious and anxious. The marquis has been unable to conceal from his mother, whom he adores, that he has found the eighth wonder of the world. People pay little attentions to the extravagances of a lover, especially when he is of noble birth and rather poor; in that case, every means of information

is good. Knowing that her former governess is in the same house with the eighth wonder, the marquise has done her the honor to write to her. The governess has replied. You see how simple the thing is."

"What have you said? May I read your letter?"

"It would hurt your modesty too much, my dear Nannie."

Inwardly she added: "Nothing was wanting but that!"

"But, anyway, what did you say?"

"That you would make the most adorable of marquises."

"Ah!"

And suddenly Nannie recalled the confidences of the Princess de Pierlé. She shivered slightly.

"Only," continued Mlle. Durand, "I know what Mme. de Sainbrillat will reply to me: 'I do not doubt it; but the coronet of a marquise which my son could offer

to your wonder of the New World needs regilding badly!"

"And," added Nannie, "it would take a great many American dollars to regild it. Give and take, then. I see that we are not the only commercial nation in the world."

"What would you have, my dear child? You must have money in order to live! Pure love will not pay the butcher's and baker's bills, any more than those of Worth. You are accustomed to a great deal of luxury. But the marquis can not sell hams for a living; besides, he would make a wretched merchant."

"Then, what keeps him back is fear-"

"It is the fear, Nannie, of being considered a fortune-hunter. He would like to marry you without a cent. But he is unwilling to marry without his mother's consent."

"There is no danger. Nannie Fairfax

would never consent to enter a family that would not be proud to receive her."

"Then, see here, Nannie, your father loves you. You would only have to say a single word—"

"And that word, mademoiselle, I will not say."

And with that, Nannie turned on her heels and walked away, tranquil and haughty.

Mlle. Durand watched her depart and then returned to add a postscript to her letter.

This little incident made Nannie reflect a great deal. The princess had hinted that the marquis probably knew very well what he proposed to do in the United States, and was carrying out a preconceived plan.

Suddenly the young girl caught a glimpse of the truth. She did not in the least believe that this letter which fell by

accident from her hands was the first that Mlle. Durand had written to the marquise. Little details recurred to her mind. Six months ago the correspondence of the governess was not nearly so voluminous. Since then she had received two or three letters a month. Mrs. Fairfax had rallied her about her mysterious Paris correspondent—a claimant for her hand, doubtless—to whom she replied at length, shutting herself up in her room to do so more at her ease.

Nevertheless, Robert loved her. Good an actor as one may be, the sudden light in the eyes, the radiant smile at sight of a person impatiently expected, can not be counterfeited. No sooner did Nannie enter a room where he was than he lost sight of all but her, he thought of no one else, he hung about her. There is a blending of sincerity and of unavowed motives in many human sentiments.

But after all, when the sincerity is real, absolute—

And yet, it was not in this way that Nannie Fairfax had dreamed that she would one day be loved.

CHAPTER VIII.

BLENDED MOTIVES BECOME ONE IN THE SNOW.

Western life has preserved its thoroughly American character, its smack of the soil. In New York, and still more in Boston, European ways have tinged the daily life of the upper classes. In Chicago, except in a restricted circle, the primitive liberty of manners was in full force at the time when "Nannie Fairfax's marquis" was paying his court. Thorough Frenchman as he was, Nannie did not hesitate to allow him to accompany her in her promenades, to the rink where she skated, and even to the theater. Nobody saw any harm in it; she less

than anybody else. This tranquil and perfect security of a young girl, in company with a young man whom she knew to be in love, impressed Robert greatly. It was certainly strange; nevertheless he was respectfully affected by it. Sometimes he thought his nature must be actually changed; his past life amazed him when he reflected on it; and at such moments he truly loved. The French court was playing pastorals at the close of a certain century!

Snow was falling abundantly; it was very cold, a dry cold which hardened the snow and made it slippery. The streets were filled with sleighs whose bells rang gayly in the clear atmosphere. Like a true daughter of the North, Nannie adored all winter pleasures; an indefatigable skater, she seemed to fly over the ice; Robert, who made no bad figure in the skating club of the Bois de Boulogne, found it difficult to keep up with

her. But what delighted her most was sleighing.

One splendid sunny day it was decided that Robert, who was a passably good driver, should have the honor of giving her a ride on the snow. Nannie had her own sleigh, a love of a sleigh, ideally light, drawn by a handsome horse noted as one of the best trotters in the city. Warmly protected by her otterskin jacket and cap, and wrapped in several buffalo robes, Nannie smilingly defied the cold, keen though it was. The marquis himself thought the thermometer had sunk too low for a pleasure trip. But he had concluded to bring his affairs to a head while gliding over the snow. The subsidies of his brother-in-law were dwindling terribly; from home they had sent him an ultimatum; a dowry of three million francs at least was demanded,—what were three poor little millions to a Fairfax! Hence the decisive moment had arrived.

Miss Fairfax had not the least suspicion. The marquis was fully occupied in moderating the speed of the horse and keeping out of the way of other vehicles of every description, from the heavy drays on runners to the elegant sleigh whose occupants exchanged gay speeches with Nannie. The latter, rejoicing in the splendid sunlight, the air charged with electricity, the movement of life that overflowed all about her, and whose manifestations, rude though they might be, she preferred to stagnation and indifference, was saying in her heart that, after all, she was born to remain an American, to live among those who were her equals, and that she would probably stifle in a society where conventions have the force of law, where the winters are sad and dirty, and where she might not be loved and appreciated as she was in Chicago.

Clark Street bridge once passed, a glance at the river, completely frozen

over, and Robert could give his impatient horse more liberty. He turned toward the lake and went up Michigan Avenue. Here the houses were real palaces and not so far apart as on the side where the Fairfaxes lived. The somewhat rough aspect of the business part of the city and the adjoining streets, where the delicate nerves of the marguis were often shocked by the contiguity of open and unabashed poverty with the most unbridled luxury, disappeared altogether in this beautiful avenue beside the lake. He felt at ease in the midst of very rich people, of luxury which seemed to offer itself to his acceptance.

Here, at least, it was not impossible to chat; the sleigh went on smoothly, without the slightest shock. In spite of the thermometer he felt thoroughly captivated by the joyousness of the lovely winter day; it even seemed to him that the extraordinarily bright sunlight on the

snow, and the blue waters of the lake, the edges of which were fringed with ice, did not lack a certain beauty.

He turned and smiled at his companion.

"So you are no longer sad, Monsieur de Sainbrillat. After all, it may have been the fear of being upset rather than melancholy which kept you silent."

"There is some truth in that," he answered, smiling. "You Americans have a habit of brushing against one another on the public road which makes foreigners uneasy. One instinctively looks for a policeman. But—there was sadness also."

"Ah! and yet you do not seem tearfully inclined by nature."

"Not at all, God be thanked!"

"Well, then?"

"Then, Miss Nannie, a light and superficial person like me sometimes finds himself in a cu de sac, obliged to reflect, and on such occasions his reflections are not all rose-colored. Will you permit me to make you acquainted with—my reflections?"

"Well—yes."

Nannie felt her heart beat; but she kept perfectly still, awaiting what could no longer be deferred. Robert, greatly moved himself, said brusquely:

"I love you, Miss Nannie, and you have known it for a long time."

"Yes, I know it," said the young girl, bravely.

"If I were master of my own actions, I would simply say to you: 'Be my wife!' What would you reply then?"

"I do not know. Why are you not master of your actions? You are a man."

"I am about to speak to you with brutal frankness."

"I love frankness, even when brutal, more than all pretence. But I shall forestall that frankness. Do not be surprised; I am better acquainted with the situation than you suppose. Your family

will not accept me unless my hands are full of gold."

"That is true."

"And you?"

Robert was put rather out of countenance by the suddenness of the question. She gave him no time to reply: a swift look at him had been enough.

"If I had been a girl without a penny you would not have followed me here. I am sure of it. Now, candor for candor. You please me much; it seems to me that I could pass my life beside you, and feel proud and happy to be your wife. But I am not sure that I truly love you. I could not with a good conscience say that vanity has no share in the attraction I feel toward you. I think that marriage is a thing sufficiently serious to make people absolutely sincere with each other, and with themselves—which is not always easy."

Robert had been annoyed by his

momentary weakness. But now he felt perfectly composed.

"Then, by that you confess that motives may be blended in human sentiments—interested ones may enter—and yet those sentiments may not be contemptible on that account?"

"Perhaps. I am not sure of it. I have told you that you please me—it is probably not true love, the love stronger than death that every woman dreams of. After all, it has not been proved to me that such love is an essential condition of life. I heard a sermon once in which the preacher said that 'vocations to marriage were not given to all'; and that in such cases it was better not to marry. I am not sure that I have a vocation to marriage. It may come, perhaps; I doubt its having come as yet."

"Not marry, when one is a woman! But that is impossible!"

"Not at all. I have friends who have

not married and who never will. They are not to be pitied, I can assure you."

"But that is monstrous!"

"Less monstrous, believe me, marquis, than marriages of self-interest and vanity."

"Ah! Nannie!" exclaimed Robert with an impulse full of verity and youth. "It is true that life is a complex thing; it is impossible for me to contract a marriage in which the question of money should be purely and simply set aside—the conditions of the society in which I live do not admit of it. And yet I swear I love you—I swear it to you."

"Of what use is it?" murmured the young girl. "I do not know your family, Monsieur de Sainbrillat; but I divine pretty nearly, in advance, how they consider me. If your mother could have found a woman in your circle who was rich enough, she would have put far away from her the idea of welcoming a

foreigner like me. How it has happened that she could not find this ideal daughter-in-law I do not know. All I do know is that I will not have any shameful bargaining about my marriage. If you love me, marry me bravely. You may be sure that my father will watch over my happiness and assure the future. As to putting your title into one scale of the balance and sacks of dollars into the other, no, never!"

Robert comprehended that this much-desired marriage would never take place. A bitter sense of disillusion constricted his heart. He felt anger raging within him at the thought of his helplessness; anger, too, against this young girl whose will expressed itself so precisely; all that was bad in him rose to his lips in a flood of bitterness.

The sleigh was gliding on with prodigious swiftness; the city was far away; nothing could be seen but snow, a dazzling

sheet extending over an almost treeless prairie, so thick that the wooden fences separating the fields could be distinguished only by an elevation of the snow under which everything disappeared. It was an immense white desert where the few houses could be guessed at only by the feathery smoke ascending from their chimneys. The sun had disappeared behind masses of somber clouds; the cold incessantly increased and became bitter.

After a somewhat prolonged silence the marquis said:

"Then, we have learned to know each other; I, at least, have loved you; and you have authorized me to do so and to hope, and all this only to be forgotten afterward, to vanish in the cold atmosphere of your country like yonder smoke! It is what you call, I think, a flirtation. Admit that it has lasted too long for nothing to come of it. What! I have

acted like a lover, we have danced together, talked together in perfect freedom; I have accompanied you in all your walks, we have spent hours alone together, I am lost here with you in this immense solitude, and this is to have no true conclusion? You will not be compromised by such assiduous attentions? One fine day you may close your door against me, and no one gossip about it, even in your own circle? No blame will fall upon you, no reflection on your conduct?"

"Monsieur de Sainbrillat, you are too anxious about my reputation. It does not incur the slightest risk, I do assure you. My life is frank and open. People know me; they are sure that Nannie Fairfax will never do anything she will have to blush for. As to the attentions you have paid me, they have been remarked, certainly. People know that, being attracted by each other, we sought to become well acquainted in order to

discover whether we really loved; that we would become man and wife if our sympathy increased; that we would separate loyally and without rancor if it diminished. I assure you, that is much better than to marry with one's eyes closed, and afterward to curse a union too precipitate. To me all this seems very simple."

The marquis did not answer, but he glanced at his companion. He saw that she was very pale, but very calm as well. Presently Nannie said:

"The cold is increasing, and our ride has been very long already. Let us go back."

Robert looked at the vast space in front of him. He was tempted to go straight ahead, to carry off by main force her who was eluding his pursuit. It was but the temptation of a moment. But it did not escape the notice of Nannie Fairfax. Nevertheless she remained per-

fectly quiet, without betraying the fear that for the first time in her life touched her heart.

The nervous hand of the marquis gave the reins a sudden jerk; the horse, springing forward at full speed, rose on its hind feet, and, turning too quickly, upset the light sleigh, got entangled in its harness, struggled, and broke the shafts. Nannie, completely muffled in her furs, fell into the deep snow at the side of the road and sank down so far that for a moment she could not emerge. Robert had been thrown to a little distance; the snow softened his fall, and he rose, a trifle giddy, and much ashamed of his adventure.

"You are not hurt? I am amazed at my own clumsiness!"

"No, nothing is the matter;—that is, my left foot pains me a little. Don't look as if you were going to a funeral," she added with a slightly nervous laugh.

"No sleigh ride is really successful if one is not thrown out. It does not matter much in the snow. It is the horse you should attend to; the important thing for us is that nothing should ail him."

Robert ran to the animal, which yielded obediently to his touch. It was uninjured, but the sleigh was a total wreck. What was to be done?

Nannie recovered her coolness in an instant. She glanced around and saw that they were at least several miles from any of the suburbs; there were few villages in this direction; only a few scattered farms dotted the lonely region. It was necessary to find one of these farms. She caught a glimpse of a faint smoke rising toward the sky; the only sign of human habitation in the white immensity where they seemed lost. They must go there. In spite of her courage, after walking a few steps, Nannie owned that she could go no farther, her foot was too

painful. Under her direction, Robert threw one of the buffalo robes on the horse, which followed its mistress like a dog, and led it toward the overturned sleigh. Nannie limped thither and mounted, leaning on the young man's hand. It was not very easy to sit steady without a saddle, but Nannie was adroit and supple; besides, there was no choice. Slowly they went toward the line of smoke through the bitter cold.

The way seemed long and was traversed in silence, Robert leading the horse. Nannie, shivering and with chattering teeth, clung as best she could to the animal.

The house was of wood and rather large, painted white, with shutters of bright green. No sign of animate life was to be seen in the yard, with its black trees, every branch laden down with hardened snow. The animals were under cover; not even a hen ventured abroad.

No one answered their knock for several minutes. At last a withered old man, with prominent cheek bones, and a beard of dirty white beneath his chin, came to the door, listened to what Nannie had to say, silently assisted her to alight and led her into a room where a woman and a young boy were huddled around a red-hot stove. The boy took the horse to a stable, and then all three gazed with silent curiosity at the two young visitors.

For the first time Robert saw the interior of a humble American home. The rather spacious room with whitewashed walls, cold and bare, was furnished with a sofa and chairs covered with black haircloth; other chairs were of straw. The old man enjoyed the seat of luxury, a large rocking-chair, likewise covered with black haircloth.

Recovering from her numbness, Nannie began to chat with the old farmer and

his family, and responded without taking offense to the very direct questions which were put to her. The difficulty was how to get out of an embarrassing position.

The only sleigh belonging to the farm had been taken by the young boy's father, who had gone to market with eggs and fowls. The simplest thing would be for the "young gentleman" to mount the horse and carry the news to Mr. Fairfax.

"My faith!" exclaimed the "young gentleman," "it is too cold in your fine country,—and then, can you imagine what I would look like going back to Chicago without a saddle, astride a buffalo robe? I should be laughed at forever after."

The old farmer looked at him in amazement; he had never been afraid of ridicule. He thought the young lady's "beau" was not equal to the situation. Turning gravely to Nannie, he said:

"He is a foreigner. Of what nation?"

"The French."

"Ah!" said the old man courteously, "that is not his fault. Everybody can not be born in the United States."

Finally, after long discussion and a good many dollars, the young boy was induced to brave the laughter dreaded by the marquis at least as much as the cold, and set off to notify Mr. Fairfax of the accident. This youthful citizen of free America was fully sensible of his own condescension. He expressed in an audible undertone his lack of consideration for strangers who did not know how to get themselves out of a scrape; he even went so far as to call them "blamed foreigners."

There was nothing more to be done, now, but to wait. The farmer's wife rose and placed on the table a pumpkin pie and a bottle of beer. Knowing that it would be a serious offense to seem to

despise what was so kindly offered, Nannie bravely cut herself a slice of the pie, the crust of which was rather soft and sticky, while the interior was composed of stewed pumpkin mixed with eggs and sugar. She invited Robert to do likewise. But courage has its limits; he pleaded want of appetite and contented himself with drinking a glass of lager-beer.

Nannie's foot pained her considerably. The farmer's wife, skilled in family medicine and surgery, rubbed it gently, installed her on the haircloth sofa, wrapped her up warmly with the furs from the sleigh, and then left the room to attend to her household affairs. The old man remained in his rocking-chair and soon fell into a drowse. Robert, believing that Nannie likewise slept, went as close as possible to the stove and began to reflect profoundly.

Nannie was not asleep. She was watch-

ing the movement of thought as it was written on the young man's countenance. She had always beheld him smiling, attentive, desirous to please. It seemed to her that this person with contracted brows and sarcastic mouth, who was thinking bitterly of the long months wasted, of the ruin of his projects, of the difficulties which life once more presented him, was no longer the same man. Once he looked in her direction, and the glance was ugly, full of rancor. She shivered slightly, and the words of the Princess de Pierlé recurred to her mind; once more, too, her suspicions took shape, and this time with singular precision. She suddenly became certain of the complicity of the governess. And with this conviction came anger. She gave herself no time for reflection. Halfrising on her elbow, she said in an undertone, so as not to rouse the farmer:

"How much was the Marquise de Sain-

brillat to give Mlle. Durand on the day of our marriage?"

Robert rose with a bound. His surprise was so great that for a moment he lost his presence of mind.

"Mademoiselle!" said he in a trembling voice.

"Listen to me, marquis; it is useless to be angry. I have my reasons for believing this monstrous thing. But if you give me your word as a gentleman—your word of honor—that it is not true, I will believe you; more, I will give you my hand—and your wife will be rich enough to satisfy even your mother. You see, I have absolute faith in your word."

He had drawn near her, and his stammering words died upon his lips. Then, drawing himself to his full height, he bowed and answered coldly:

"You have guessed correctly, mademoiselle. I came to America hoping to marry you and buttress my sinking fortune with your sacks of dollars. Mlle. Durand played the part of matrimonial agent. Is this all that you desire to know?"

There was a moment of silence and Robert resumed his seat beside the stove. Presently he heard a stifled sob. Nannie was crying. He did not stir. But his anger evaporated; he felt exceedingly sad. At last he said:

"Yes, all that is not very fine; I know it. And yet I am less contemptible than you think. There are fatalities attached to a birth like mine. I could not work; we are taught nothing but how to amuse ourselves. I ought to have become a soldier; I did not. The life I led offered terrible temptations; I was unable to resist them. You see I do not flatter myself. I was weak, I am terribly in debt; nevertheless, I assure you that I have never committed a villainous action. I am, perhaps, better

than my reputation, which is—I tell you so in all humility—detestable. And yet with all that I have loved you sincerely, almost simply—"

"The Prince de Pierlé said he loved, also."

"The Prince de Pierlé is a wretch. I allowed myself to be drawn along by a very strong current which, doubtless, I might have resisted; but I am not a Prince de Pierlé. I think I could have made you happy."

"No, that would have been impossible. And yet, it is a pity, it is a great pity!"

In spite of this little plaint, sad and sweet, Robert had only to look at her to know that all was over between them. He said no more, and the silence was interrupted only by the heavy breathing of the sleeping farmer.

A merry sound of bells rang out through the freezing air. Mr. Fairfax, with all the speed of his best horses, had come to seek his daughter. She sank into his arms and felt herself in safety.

* * * * * * *

Two months later the journals announced in glaring headlines the marriage of the Marquis Robert de Sainbrillat and Miss Loulou Smith of San Francisco. As he handed a newspaper to his daughter, Mr. Fairfax said with a smile:

"I am glad it is she rather than you."

"Loulou Smith—the American for Exportation!—that was all that was lacking."

And yet a light cloud had gathered in the clear blue sky of Nannie Fairfax's youth. The first freshness of her impulsive and enthusiastic nature was slightly veiled. She had been on the point of loving.

But the slight cloud will soon pass over.



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